FGDC Annual Report to OMB

The following outline should be used by FGDC Member Agencies (or Bureaus) for their Annual Spatial Data Reports, which will be consolidated by the FGDC and submitted to OMB. Reports **should be brief, using bullets where possible**. Please provide only the information that will be useful for OMB to assess the agencies' achievements and for establishing future direction.

GENERAL FEDERAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES REPORT (All Agencies)

1. *Agency or Bureau*: USDA **Natural Resources Conservation Service**

2. *Name of Contact for Report:*

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3. *Steering Committee Member:*

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4. *Coordination Group Participant(s):*

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5. *Subcommittee or Working Group Participation (Subcommittees or Working Groups your agency is involved with, but does not lead).*

Subcommittees	Working Groups
Base Cartographic Data	Biologic Data
Geologic	Geospatial Applications & Interoperability
Spatial Water Data	Homeland Security
Vegetation	Standards
Wetlands	Sustainable Forest Data
	Tribal
	Earth Cover (inactive)

6. *Strategy: Has your agency prepared a detailed strategy for integrating geographic information and spatial data activities into your business process - in coordination with the FGDC strategy, pursuant to OMB Circular A-16? If yes, briefly describe.*
   - Yes. To support timely access and accurate application of the data, the agency has incorporated spatial data into most program management strategies as well as the overall effort for the NRCS *Integrated Information System* which encompasses seven critical software applications, among them, the geospatial data gateway and warehouse.
   - Detailed plans addressing data delivery, system architecture, USDA data standards and GPRA goals have been developed. The combined USDA Service Center Agencies (NRCS, RD, FSA), have developed the *USDA Service Center Agencies GIS Implementation Strategy, 2001*. See http://www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/nsdi_node.html.

7. *Compliance: How are your spatial data holdings compliant with FGDC Standards? Also, please list the FGDC Standards you are using or plan to use in your organization.*
   - NRCS uses or partners in data acquisition efforts which use the following endorsed FGDC standards;

- Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata (version 2.0) FGDC- STD-001-1998
- Soil Geographic Data Standard, FGDC-STD-006
- Content Standard for Digital Orthoimagery, FGDC-STD-008-1999

➢ NRCS is implementing the Federal Standard for Delineation of Hydrologic Unit Boundaries. This standard is in the proposal phase and has not yet been endorsed by FGDC.

➢ USDA/NRCS and the USDA Service Center Agencies have developed standards specific to unique business needs. See http://dlnt20.fsa.usda.gov/scdm/ for USDA data management efforts.

8. *Redundancy: Prior to collecting data, how does your agency ensure that the data are not already available?*
   ➢ NRCS relies upon local communication, the NSDI clearinghouse, national coordination bodies such as FGDC, federal, state and local partners, informal geospatial data community, state geospatial consortiums and the private data vendor community to identify available data.

9. *Collection: Do your agency contracts and grants involving data collection include costs for NSDI standards?*
   ➢ Yes. However they often do not include the long term support and maintenance of hardware required to serve data.

10. *Clearinghouse: Is all the data and/or metadata that your agency is able to share with the public published on the NSDI Clearinghouse? If not, please cite barriers encountered.*
    ➢ No. NRCS generates several program specific datasets that are available from NRCS websites but not discoverable via the Clearinghouse due primarily to the lack of existing FGDC compliant metadata.
    ➢ NRCS must deploy data to roughly 2,600 field offices. The majority of staff are natural resources specialists who use GIS software and data to support their conservation planning efforts and are not GIS specialists. The NSDI Clearinghouse requires an investment of time which field staff would prefer to dedicate towards field related conservation activities. As a result the USDA Service Center Agencies have deployed an application which better meets the needs of staff. The application supports on-screen geographic selection of the area of interest, online data ordering and real-time download capability of smaller datasets. This application is referred to as the Resource Data Gateway, and can be accessed at http://lighthouse.nrcs.usda.gov/gateway/.

11. *E-Gov: How are you using geospatial data in your mission activities to provide better services? (Please list)*
    ➢ NRCS has identified eighteen major customer products and services which support E-government activities. Of these, thirteen rely upon or have a geospatial component to facilitate information retrieval and data analysis. These activities further support the USDA E-government strategy. See www.egov.usda.gov for USDA strategy. Examples of NRCS applications supporting E-government:
      - Customer Service Toolkit (CST) – conservation planning software tool.
      - Resource Data Gateway – single point of access for geospatial information.
      - Wetland Easements Tool – supports update and tracking of wetland easement boundaries for restoration and planning.
      - Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) - supports local resource decision making.
      - Office Information Profile (OIP) - allows customers to locate agency offices and staff in their area of interest.

- Geospatial data are a critical component of the Performance and Results Management System (PRMS) and the Integrated Accountability System (IAS). Using these tools, agency leadership is able to refine strategic goals and better define customer needs. http://calais.itc.nrcs.usda.gov/IAS2002/, http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/land/index/ and http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/CCS/GHopeHit.html
- NRCS allows internal and external customers to order digital geospatial data via the Internet from http://lighthouse.nrcs.usda.gov/lighthouse/ or access data via the NSDI node.

12. *Geospatial One-Stop: How is your agency involved in the Geospatial One-Stop?*
    - NRCS has provided $45,000 in FY02 direct funding and identified staff to support the standards effort.
    - NRCS staff are members of existing coordination bodies for digital orthoimagery, elevation and hydrography which will also support the Geospatial One Stop.

13. *Enterprise Architecture: Is geospatial data a component of your enterprise architecture? Please provide a brief summary of how geospatial data fits into your enterprise architecture.*
    - The USDA Service Center Agencies (SCA) maintain a shared enterprise architecture. Geospatial data are a key component and driver of that architecture, especially the data architecture. The SCA's are implementing a mixed decentralized and centralized architecture to accommodate the need of all three agencies.
    - The data architecture accommodates the need for geospatial data at all levels of the organizations, local, state and national. At the local and state levels data are being provided to all three agencies and their partners from shared servers using FGDC standard data and metadata in a common file and folder structure. SCA are currently implementing geodata warehouses that will provide web delivery of geospatial data to local, state and national offices and our customers.
    - These geodata warehouses will become part of the Geospatial Data One-Stop architecture.

14. *Partnerships: What efforts are being taken to coordinate data and build partnerships at the field level for data collection and standards development? Identify partnerships and data sharing activities with other federal agencies, state, local, and tribal governments and other entities.*
    - NRCS staff are active members of the state geodata consortiums which are critical in leveraging funds to support data development.
    - Where I-Teams have been formed or are coincident with the state consortiums, NRCS staff participate.
    - NRCS state level partnerships with other federal agencies, states, local and tribal governments are too numerous to list. Examples include, staff sharing between NRCS, BLM and Forest Service, multi-partner funding for the completion of soil surveys, university partnerships to support digital data development and DOQ development with USGS. State by state detailed information available upon request.
    - The National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) is a national, multi partner effort to support the collection, distribution and interpretation of soils information. Details of the partnership and standards process available at: http://www.geoall.net/docs/lessons_from_practice.pdf.

15. *Concerns or Lessons Learned: Are there areas or issues regarding spatial data that require attention or lessons learned that you would like to share with others? Please describe.*
    - There are few incentives for cross-agency cooperation since budget allocations are specifically linked to individual agency accomplishments. This tends to impede

cooperation since few short-term tangible products are evident from cooperation. There needs to be a greater value associated with cooperation and partnership development.

- Alternative performance measures for long-term data development strategies are needed. Digital data development for national programs such as the National Cooperative Soil Survey take years to complete.
- Long term data maintenance, distribution and security measures must be accurately addressed by agencies and included in yearly allocations.
- A multitude of geospatial coordinating efforts, standards bodies and consortiums have developed in the last several years with the intention of expediting digital data generation, availability and application. The complimentary relationship between these efforts needs to be clearly documented.
- The relationship between private sector and federal data warehouse/portal activities needs to be explored to minimize duplicative, non complimentary activities.